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AMERICAN NAVAL CHRONICLE.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE OF

CAPTAIN JAMES BIDDLE.

CAPTAIN JAMES BIDDLE, is the son of Charles Biddle, Esq. of Philadelphia, and was born on the 18th of February, 1783. The name of Biddle is advantageously known in this country in literature, and in arms; at a time when the sordid pursuit of gain, seems to occupy the minds, and impel the actions of the youth of the United States, to the exclusion of nobler objects, we find three brothers* of this name engaged in the service of their country, during a period in which that service was attended with infinite danger and hardship, and honourably distinguished themselves, wherever an opportunity for acquiring distinction occurred. A fourth brother died on board the frigate *President* at sea, in the year 1800, while a midshipman. He is said to have been a youth of great promise, gifted with physical qualities and mental acquirements, that indicated future eminence. Captain Biddle received his education at the University of Pennsylvania, where he became an excellent scholar, and acquired a taste for literature, which he still retains, in the midst of the duties of his active profession. At the period when he attained to that age in which the mind of youth begins to look forward to a profession, as the means of acquiring distinction, or competency, the Navy of the United States had begun to draw the attention of the people, and to attract the eyes of young men, ambitious of honourable fame. The two successive victories of Capt. Truxtun over the French frigates *Insurgent* and *Vengeance*, had secured the favour of the nation, and it

* Major Thos. Biddle, Captain Jno. Biddle, both of the United States Artillery, and the subject of this article.

had consequently become popular in the Government to foster a naval establishment.

Captain Truxtun was now on the eve of a cruise in a larger vessel, and on this occasion, Mr. Biddle complied with the wishes of two of his sons, James the subject of this sketch, and Edward whose early death we have just noticed, by placing them under the care of that experienced officer. This cruise terminated, however, much sooner than was expected, by the peace with France, and afforded no opportunity for acquiring any reputation, but that which arises from the able and faithful discharge of the daily duties annexed to the economy of a vessel of war. It is indeed owing to the proper discharge of these duties, that success attends men in the hour of struggle and difficulty; but as they are not calculated to excite the attention of the public, it is customary to pass them by with a general notice. Still, it ought not to be forgotten, that the glory of the service, and the attainment of success, are inseparably connected with the nice and critical discharge of those official duties, that the world knows nothing of, and which are not thought worthy of its praise. But when we contemplate a victory gained over an enemy, accustomed to triumph over every opponent, in every sea, it is not alone the splendour of the achievement that should monopolize our feelings. We should reflect on the vast expense of labour by which the skill and discipline necessary to this result was acquired, and on the patience, perseverance, zeal and ability of that admirable race of gallant officers, under whose auspices the system was brought to such perfection.

Soon after the cessation of hostilities with the French Republic, the naval establishment was reduced by the act of Congress of March 3d, 1801, and only nine Captains, thirty-six Lieutenants, and one hundred and fifty Midshipmen, in consequence, retained in the service. By this reduction, undoubtedly many officers were discarded from the service, who were eminently qualified for the stations they occupied; but we do not find that they were guilty of uttering indecent clamours against the executive officer, to whose lot it fell to administer the laws of the land, or cancelled the debt their coun-

try might owe them, by branding her with the imputation of ingratitude. They bore their fate with the decent firmness of a manly mind, and their example is particularly worthy of imitation. Mr. Biddle was selected as one of the midshipmen to be retained; a preference which while it is honourable to him, conveys no reflection on those who had not the same good fortune. There is neither justice nor charity, in wounding the feelings of disappointed men, by insinuating that their disappointment is the consequence of a want of merit, rather than of the absolute necessity of passing by many, where a great number are worthy of success, but where all cannot be successful.

In the year 1802, the Bashaw of Tripoli having previously committed hostilities against the United States, Mr. Biddle sailed in the *Constellation* for the Mediterranean. The object of that vessel's equipment was the protection of the American trade against the Tripolitan cruizers, in which pursuit he visited various ports and islands in the Mediterranean. As a classical scholar, Mr. Biddle must have derived infinite gratification from thus seeing with his own eyes, those scenes so familiar to his imagination, as the theatre of events, renowned for their magnitude and effects, or illustrious from the manner in which they are described by the Poet and the Historian.

From this station so peculiarly gratifying to the enthusiasm of a scholar, the *Constellation* returned in the spring of the year 1803, and was laid up at Washington. Mr. Biddle was in consequence transferred to the frigate *Philadelphia*, which sailed for the Mediterranean in July, the same year. The loss of this unfortunate ship, and her subsequent destruction in the harbour of Tripoli, by the gallantry of Decatur and his companions, is well known. In consequence of that loss, Mr. Biddle became a slave to the Bashaw of Tripoli; than which the imagination can hardly conceive a situation more irksome, tedious, and irritating to men of ardent minds, and active habits. In this situation, though exempt from actual violence, they suffered a close and rigorous confinement of nineteen months, during which time they made a

number of daring attempts to escape, but without success, although on one occasion, several of them got actually out of the prison upon the parapet, which however they could not pass. Under all these discouragements and disappointments, without air, or exercise, employment, or the hope of release, and placed too at the mercy of a barbarian, unaccustomed to regard the common usages of civilized war, still they kept up their spirits and their health during this long lingering captivity. They agreed never to desert each other; to remain for ever in prison, or to be freed altogether; and to support their own, as well as the country's honour, by firmness, cheerfulness and unconquerable fortitude. Accordingly, all attempts to ransom any individual, by private exertions, were uniformly declined by all, and among these instances was that of Mr. Biddle, who discountenanced his family in obtaining his freedom by that means. Like faithful children, they looked for deliverance only through the good offices of their parent country, who at last gained their release by the exertion of arms. It has often been noticed, but it can never be too often repeated, that, on this occasion they received the kindest attentions from Mr. Nissen, the Danish Consul, whose good offices were never for a moment remitted. We know not whether any public acknowledgement was ever made to this excellent man, but we know that no one ever deserved it better. Sir Alexander Ball, Governor of the Island of Malta, to whom Mr. Biddle had letters of friendly recommendation, also wrote to the British Consul to interest him in his behalf, maintained a friendly correspondence, and occasionally supplied him with articles that were highly acceptable in his destitute situation.

At the conclusion of the peace with the Bashaw of Tripoli, in which the release of prisoners was stipulated, Mr. Biddle returned to America with Capt. Bainbridge. They landed at Norfolk, and travelled thence by land to Philadelphia, where they arrived in the month of September 1805. During the whole of their journey, the people, who had sympathized most deeply in their captivity, received them every where with the most affectionate attentions, and manifested their considera-

tion by paying those distinctions which are becoming the nature of our institutions and government. From this period, Mr. Biddle, who on his release had been promoted to a lieutenancy, was engaged in various situations until the breaking out of the war with Great Britain. He cruised for some time in a gun boat on the southern coast in company with the *John Adams*; was employed in surveying the harbour of Beaufort; from whence he came to Philadelphia, where after residing some time with his family, he obtained a furlough, and made a voyage to China in a merchant ship. On his return he was employed under Commodore Murray in a flotilla of gun boats, enforcing the embargo. No other service than that of the gun boats was during this period open to our officers, as the *Chesapeake* was the only frigate in commission.

In the year 1809, however, the equipment of a number of vessels being authorised, and Commodore Bainbridge appointed to the *President*, Mr. Biddle was assigned as his second lieutenant. In consequence of there being no prospect of active service, Capt. Bainbridge, in 1810, obtained a furlough, and in consequence relinquished the command of the *President*. Lieutenant Biddle was then ordered to take charge of the *Syren* from Philadelphia to Hampton Roads, where he joined the *Constitution*, Capt. Hull. From thence, in expectation that there would be an affair between a British frigate and the *President*, he went on board the latter vessel, which was short in her complement of lieutenants. This expectation was founded on the irritation then subsisting, on account of that disgraceful event which is known by the appellation of the affair of the *Chesapeake*. The *President* sailed soon after but met with no British frigate. This vessel being laid up for the winter at New London, Mr. Biddle made a voyage to Lisbon, and on his return carried out dispatches to our minister at Paris, where he remained nearly four months. Although in these various situations no opportunity occurred for the performance of those actions which call the attention of the world to an individual, yet Mr. Biddle's conduct throughout them all was such as to gain the esteem and confidence of those with whom he acted, and to convince them,

that he was capable of meeting the exigencies of a much higher sphere of duty.

Very shortly after his return from France, the war between the United states and Great Britain began. At this period Mr. Biddle was not assigned to any vessel, but as his mind was never, on any occasion, reconciled to a state of inactivity, it is not to be supposed that on this occasion, so calculated to excite the soldier's feelings, he would omit any exertion to obtain immediate employment. He repaired forthwith to New York, for the purpose of volunteering on board the President, then commanded by Commodore Rodgers. To his great disappointment, however, he found on his arrival that she had already proceeded to sea, accompanied by all the public vessels in that port, except the Essex, Captain Porter. To him therefore he applied, but as he was senior to all the lieutenants of the Essex, and consequently would outrank them, Captain Porter very properly decided ultimately that his request was inadmissible.

Mr. Biddle returned to Philadelphia, and used various other efforts to get into active service, but though government was aware of his talents, and well disposed to grant his wishes, no opportunity occurred, until the arrival of the Wasp, Captain Jones, with dispatches from our minister in France. She was deficient in the necessary number of officers, and an order was forwarded from the Navy Department for Mr. Biddle to join her as first lieutenant. The Wasp proceeded to sea the 13th of October 1812, and six days after fell in with six sail of British merchantmen, four of them mounting from sixteen or eighteen guns, and carrying from forty to fifty men each. It was immediately determined to attack the sloop of war under whose convoy they were, and at thirty-two minutes past eleven, the Wasp, being to windward, bore down upon her larboard side, within sixty yards, and hailed. The enemy hoisted the British ensign, and answered by a broadside, which was immediately returned by the Wasp, who ranged up close to her antagonist, and the action became exceedingly hot and severe. The wind blew a fresh gale, and the sea was so rough that the muzzles of the Wasp's guns

frequently dipped into the water. In the course of this brisk exchange of broadsides, the Wasp shot a-head, and raked her opponent. It was not originally the intention of Captain Jones to board, on account of the roughness of the weather, but the braces of the Wasp being all shot away, and being apprehensive his masts would shortly go by the board, he altered his plans, and gave orders to run upon the enemy. The two vessels came together with a most severe concussion, and the jib-boom of the Frolick went in between the main and mizen rigging of the Wasp, immediately over the heads of Captain Jones and Lieutenant Biddle, who were standing near the capstan. The enemy being thus placed in a situation to be again raked with great effect, it was determined to give him a closing broadside previous to boarding. This was accordingly done, and two of the guns being fired through the bow ports of the Frolick, swept the whole length of her deck with great slaughter of the enemy. This done, Lieutenant Biddle, in pursuance of a previous understanding with Capt. Jones, mounted the hammock cloth, with intention to board, but his feet becoming entangled in the rigging of the Frolick's bowsprit, while at the same time he was seized by a midshipman who was following, by the skirt of his coat, he fell back on the deck of the Wasp. He however immediately renewed the attempt, and the next swell bringing the enemy closer, he succeeded in gaining the bowsprit of the enemy, passed two sailors who had preceeded him to the forecastle, and was astonished to find that the only persons remaining on deck were the commander Captain Whinyates, two officers, and a seaman at the wheel. On seeing Lieutenant Biddle, the officers threw down their swords, making at the same time an inclination of the body indicating their surrender. The colours of the Frolick being still flying, Lieutenant Biddle hauled them down, forty-three minutes after the first broadside. Her decks offered a dreadful spectacle. The birth deck more especially, was covered with the dead and dying. Captain Jones sent his surgeon's mate on board, and Lieutenant Biddle directed all the purser's blankets and slops to be brought up for the use of the wounded, and every exertion

that humanity could dictate was made to alleviate the horrors and sufferings of war.

This action has always been considered one of the most desperate and sanguinary of those which have been fought during the late war, and perhaps more decisive of the question of superiority than any other. The force of the enemy was decidedly superior; his sails, masts, and rigging suffered less than those of the *Wasp*, consequently he possessed superior advantages in manœuvring, and his loss compared with ours, was, on his own estimate, more than six to one killed, and nearly twelve to one wounded. The *Wasp* mounted sixteen thirty-two pound carronades and two long twelves; the *Frolick* carried sixteen thirty-two pound carronades, two long twelves, and two twelve pound carronades on her main deck, and two twelve pound carronades on the top-gallant forecastle, giving a superiority to the latter of four twelve pound carronades. It may serve to give the reader some data, from which he may be able to form an estimate of the character of this *new enemy*, which has lately appeared on the ocean, if we compare the losses of England in some of these single engagements, with those she has suffered in her great sea fights, where fleets were engaged, and navies annihilated.

By the official details published at the time, it appears that in the engagement between Lord Bridport and the French squadron off L'Orient in 1795, which lasted three hours, and in which twenty-eight sail of the line and nineteen frigates were opposed to each other, the British lost twenty-four killed, and one hundred and eight wounded. In the action between the English and French fleets of the 3d of November 1805, when eleven sail of the line and three frigates were engaged for three hours and a half, and all the French ships captured, the British loss is stated at twenty-four killed and one hundred and eleven wounded. In the action between Admiral Calder and the combined fleets, the 22d of July 1805, which lasted upwards of four hours, in which thirty-five sail of the line and ten frigates were engaged, and several sail of the enemy taken, the British loss was officially stated to be forty-one killed, and one hundred and fifty-eight wounded. In

the action with the *Constitution*, which lasted fifteen minutes, the *Guerriere* lost in killed and wounded one hundred and five men—in that between the *Wasp* and *Frolick* sloops of war, which lasted forty-three minutes, the latter lost eighty—in that between the frigates *United States* and *Macedonian*, the latter lost one hundred and four—and in that between the *Constitution* and *Java*, the latter lost one hundred and seventy-one in killed and wounded. The conviction on comparing these various actions, becomes irresistible, that the enemies which the British navy has been accustomed to meet, are different from the American officers and seamen, and that victories gained with such a trifling loss, are no great subjects of triumph or exultation.

The people of the *United States*, with whom it is now considered a matter of course to beat an Englishman on his own element, were not then become indifferent to these new and unaccustomed triumphs. They heard the news of this decisive victory with feelings of unconquerable exultation, and Captain Jones received the warmest testimonials of public gratitude from every quarter. To the agency of Lieutenant Biddle, in this engagement, the relation we have given, and the testimony of his gallant commander, bear ample testimony. In his official letter Captain Jones says, "Lieutenant Biddle's active conduct contributed much to our success, by the exact attention paid to every department during the engagement, and the animating example he afforded the crew by his intrepidity." In addition to this unequivocal proof of merit, the legislature of *Pennsylvania* voted him the thanks of the commonwealth, and a sword; and the legislature of *Maryland* requested the governor to address letters of thanks to Captain Jones and Lieutenant Biddle, expressing the high sense they entertained of their gallantry and skill. Congress likewise voted a gold medal to Captain Jones, and a silver one to the commissioned officers under him; and a number of gentlemen of *Philadelphia* presented Lieutenant Biddle with a magnificent silver urn, emblematical of his gallantry, and their attachment.

On taking possession of the *Frolick*, Captain Jones placed

her under the orders of Lieutenant Biddle, who was directed to rig jury masts, in the room of her main and fore masts, that had gone over very soon after the action, and to make the best of his way to a southern port of the United States. Before they separated, however, they had the misfortune to fall in with the *Poictiers* of seventy-four guns, and as the situation of both vessels precluded every hope of escape or resistance, both were surrendered. The captain and officers were carried to Bermuda, released on their parole after a short detention, and returned in safety to the United States.

On his being exchanged, Lieutenant Biddle was promoted to the rank of master commandant in the Navy, and assumed the command of all the gun boats that were stationed in the Delaware. He afterwards succeeded Captain Lawrence in the command of the *Hornet*, which vessel was at first intended to join the *Chesapeake* in a cruise against the British trade to the Canadas. On the capture of that ever unlucky vessel, whose destiny outweighed even the valour and the fortunes of a Lawrence, Captain Biddle, pursuant to subsequent orders, joined the squadron under Commodore Decatur, which was blockaded in the harbour of New London, by a superior force of the enemy, until the conclusion of the war. Captain Biddle, like his gallant commander, and every soul under him, lamented the inactive life that was the consequence of this detention in port, and the former applied for permission to attempt an escape with the *Hornet* alone. This did not, however, accord with the views of the government, and his request was not granted.

The squadron to which Captain Biddle belonged, remained in the harbour of New London, in the hope of getting out to sea during the season of heavy gales; but when this had passed away, without affording any opportunity, the two frigates were moored as high up the river as possible, and dismantled; Commodore Decatur and his crew being transferred to the frigate *President*. When this arrangement had taken place, and the season favourable for the enemy to make an attack on those vessels, if they had such an intention, had passed away, Captain Biddle again applied for, and obtained permis-

sion to attempt his escape in the *Hornet*. He succeeded in evading the British squadron, and joined a force at New York, intended to cruise under Commodore Decatur, in the East Indies. That officer went to sea in the *President*, on the 14th of January, 1815, having the sloops of war *Peacock*, *Captain Warrington*, and *Hornet*, to convoy the store ship, which was not in readiness to accompany them at that time. They did not get out until the 23d January, and separated a few days after, in consequence of the *Hornet* chasing a vessel, which, on being overhauled, proved a Portuguese. From this they proceeded singly for their first rendezvous, which was the Island of Tristan d'Acunha.

On the morning of the 23d of March, at the moment the *Hornet* was preparing to anchor off that island, a sail hove in sight, steering to the northward, with a fine breeze, and disappeared in a few minutes behind a projecting point of land. The *Hornet* immediately made sail, and on clearing the point, discovered the same vessel, bearing down before the wind, when Captain Biddle shortened sail, and hove to for her to come up with him. When the stranger got near, he began also to shorten sail, and took in his steering sails very clumsily for the purpose of practising a deception, as it afterwards appeared. He also came down stern on, in order, as the officers afterwards acknowledged, that the *Hornet* should not see her broadside and attempt to escape. The engagement cannot be better described than in the words of Captain Biddle's official letter.

“ At 1h. 40m. P. M. says he, being nearly within musket
“ shot distance, she hauled her wind on the starboard tack,
“ hoisted English colours, and fired a gun. We immediately
“ luffed to, hoisted our ensign, and gave the enemy a broad-
“ side. The action being thus commenced, a quick and well
“ directed fire was kept up from this ship, the enemy gradual-
“ ly shifting nearer to us, when at 1h. 55m. he bore up ap-
“ parently to run us on board. As soon as I perceived that he
“ would certainly fall on board, I called the boarders, so as to
“ be ready to repel any attempt to board us. At the instant
“ every officer and man repaired to the quarter deck, where

“the two vessels were coming in contact, and eagerly pressed
“me to permit them to board the enemy. But this I would
“not permit, as it was evident from the commencement of
“the action that our fire was greatly superior, both in quick-
“ness and effect. The enemy’s bowsprit came in between our
“main and mizen rigging, on the starboard side, which afford-
“ed him an opportunity of boarding us if such had been his
“design, but no attempt was made. There was a considerable
“swell on, and as the sea lifted us ahead, the enemy’s bow-
“sprit carried away our mizen shrouds, stern davits, and
“spanker boom; and he hung upon our larboard quarter. At
“this moment an officer who was afterwards recognized to be
“Mr. M’Donald, the first lieutenant, and the then command-
“ing officer, called out that they had surrendered. I directed
“the marines and musketry men to cease firing, and while on
“the taffrail asking if they had surrendered, I received a
“wound in the neck. The enemy just then got clear of us,
“and his foremast and bowsprit being both gone, and per-
“ceiving us wearing to give him a fresh broadside, he again
“called out that he had surrendered. It was with difficulty I
“could restrain my crew from firing into him again, as he had
“certainly fired into us after having surrendered. From the
“firing of the first gun to the last time the enemy cried out
“he had surrendered, it was exactly twenty-two minutes by
“the watch. She proved to be his *Britannic majesty’s* brig
“*Penguin*, mounting sixteen thirty-two pound carronades,
“two long twelves, and a twelve pound carronade on the top-
“gallant forecastle, with swivels on the capstan and on the
“tops. She had a spare port forward so as to fight both her
“long guns of a side. She sailed from England in September
“last. She was shorter on deck than this ship by two feet, but
“had greater length of keel, greater breadth of beam, thicker
“sides and higher bulwarks than this ship, and was in all re-
“spects a remarkably fine vessel of her class. The enemy ac-
“knowledge a complement of 132, twelve of them supernume-
“rary marines from the *Medway* 74, received on board in
“consequence of her being ordered to cruise for the *Ameri-*
“*can* privateer *Young Wasp*. They acknowledged also a loss

“of 14 killed and 28 wounded; but Mr. Mayo, who was in charge of the prize, assures me that the number of killed was certainly greater.” The *Hornet* had one killed and eleven wounded. Among the killed of the *Penguin* was Captain Dickinson her commander, who is represented to have been a deserving and favourite officer. Not a single round shot struck the hull of the *Hornet*, but her sides were filled with grape, and her sails and rigging much cut. The *Penguin* was so severely cut up, had lost so many of her spars, and those remaining were so crippled, that it was determined not to attempt sending her in, and she was accordingly scuttled.

Among the many honourable characteristics, in the character of our sailors, is their attachment to their officers. Being volunteers in the fullest extent of the term, there is no occasion to exercise that jealous watchfulness, which is so necessary on board a British man of war, where a large portion of the crew in most instances, is composed of men impressed into the service. There is consequently a mutual confidence between our sailors and officers, which is the foundation of a reciprocal good will and affection. Our commanders know they can always trust to the fidelity of their men, who during the war with England, were permitted, when in port, to go on shore at all times. The crew of the frigate *United States*, were all on shore at New York, at one time, at the Theatre, from whence they dispersed all over the town, yet not one attempted to desert. Several other instances of the kind occurred, in the course of the war, and the result was invariably the same.

This fidelity, and attachment, was evinced in the case of Capt. Biddle, who in the early part of the action with the *Penguin*, was several times scratched in the face with splinters, which disfigured him considerably. When afterwards he was struck with a musket ball, in the neck, and the blood flowed profusely, the anxiety of the crew became very great. Two of the men took him in their arms, to carry him below, but finding he would not permit it, one of these honest-hearted affectionate fellows, stript off his shirt and tied it round his commander's neck to stop the bleeding. It is a circum-

stance honourable to this gallant young officer, that his own wound was the last dressed on board the *Hornet*.

It is a fact, as it now stands, no way honourable to the character of the British sailor, that Capt. Biddle received his wound after the *Penguin* had surrendered. While standing on the taffrail, after having directed the firing to cease on board the *Hornet*, in consequence of the surrender, one of his officers cried out, that a man was taking aim at him; Capt. Biddle, however, did not hear him, but a couple of marines seeing the fellow taking aim, fired and shot him dead, not however until he had discharged his piece, standing at not more than twelve yards distant. The ball struck Capt. Biddle's chin, passed along the neck, and disengaged itself at the back, though his cravat, waistcoat, and the collar of his coat.

In a conversation with Mr. M'Donald, the oldest surviving officer of the *Penguin*, he informed Capt. Biddle, that Capt. Dickinson said to him, but a moment before his life was terminated by a grape shot, " M'Donald, this fellow hits us every time, we can't stand his fire, we must run him on board." When the command devolved on Mr. M'Donald he gave orders to board, but his men declined an experiment which would assuredly have been fatal, as every officer and man of the *Hornet* was prepared for their reception, and the crew were eagerly anxious for permission to board the *Penguin*. It is somewhat remarkable, that no British account of this action has yet appeared. Perhaps it may have been forgotten in the more important events of the times; or possibly the Lords of the Admiralty are tired of the trouble of finding out reasons for these unaccountable defeats, a task that would exhaust the ingenuity and invention of the most prolific genius. That the account, when it is published, will be different from the one we have received, the experience of every former occasion renders extremely probable. The victor wants no excuses; it is for those who are beaten to devise grounds for the catastrophe. Accordingly, we always find a vanquished enemy has the most to say for himself, and can always give cogent reasons for his being beaten. There is more magnanimity displayed in the acknowledgment of de-

feat, than in refraining from indulging the triumphant feelings of victory. But the former, most especially, is a species of magnanimity which has seldom been indulged in by the government of England, in respect to this country.

A few days after this action, Capt. Biddle was joined by Capt. Warrington, in the *Peacock*, accompanied by the ship *Tom Bowline*, and as the *Hornet* required but few repairs, she was soon ready again for service. Having waited the appointed time at Tristan d'Acunha, without being joined by the President, they converted the *Tom Bowline* into a cartel, dispatched her to St. Salvador with the prisoners, and on the 12th of April, set sail for the Cape of Good Hope. On the 27th they saw a strange sail, to which they gave chase, but did not approach near enough to ascertain what she was until the afternoon of the next day, when the *Peacock*, being the headmost vessel, made signal that she was a ship of the line, and an enemy. On this the *Hornet* haled upon a wind, and the enemy commenced a chase, which lasted nearly thirty-six hours, during which time he fired several times into the *Hornet*, at not more than a distance of three quarters of a mile. On this occasion Capt. Biddle displayed a degree of skill, perseverance and fortitude, highly honourable to the character of our Navy. Though still weak from his wounds, he continued to encourage his men by example and exhortation, preserved the utmost coolness, exerted the most admirable skill, and finally, notwithstanding he was several times exposed to the enemy's fire, at the distance of less than three quarters of a mile, preserved his gallant little vessel and her crew to their country. There are few situations in which the sterling qualities of an officer are more severely tested than the one just described, nor is it easy to offer any higher praise than to say, that in this long and arduous struggle Capt. Biddle fulfilled the wishes of his friends, and the hopes of his country.

The loss of her guns and various other articles of equipment, thrown overboard during this chase, rendered it necessary for the *Hornet* to return to some port; and as it would have been extremely hazardous to attempt getting home under

such circumstances, Captain Biddle determined to make for St. Salvador. His intention was to refit at that place, and continue his cruise; but on his arrival there he learned the ratification of peace between the United States and Great Britain, and proceeded in consequence to New York, where he arrived the thirtieth of July. During his absence he had been promoted to the rank of post captain; and on his return the citizens of New York gave him a public dinner, while those of Philadelphia, with their characteristic liberality, raised a subscription for a service of plate to be presented to him, in consideration of his public services and private worth. A court of enquiry was held at his desire, to investigate the cause of the return of the *Hornet*, as well as the circumstances which led to the loss of her armament, &c. and Captain Biddle was acquitted with merited compliments to his skill, and persevering gallantry.

Captain Biddle is of a middle size, perhaps a little below it, and slender in his make. Yet his countenance and deportment bespeak great spirit, animation, activity, and intelligence. It will be perceived in the course of the preceding details, that to great personal intrepidity he adds the rarer qualities of perseverance and self possession in difficult emergencies. He evinced the one in his steady exertions to be employed in active service, and the other in the long and arduous chase in which his coolness was so remarkably conspicuous. We know not whether he has gained in the course of his honourable career, a sufficiency of wealth to make him an object of attention to prudent mothers, or wary match-makers, or to enable him to vie with many of the promising young traders, and hopeful juvenile brokers of this golden age. Thus much, however, we do know, that he will long remain an object of grateful attention to his country, and his name be quoted by posterity among those who have rendered our nation illustrious. His family was among the early settlers of this new world; but it has a better title to honour than that of antiquity, for it has given brave defenders to its country.

There is another point in which we cannot gratify the curiosity of the reader, and that is whether Captain Biddle is

a republican or a federal republican. Indeed we did not take any great pains to ascertain this important point. Our gallant officers seem to have belonged to no party, and to have been no great dabblers in those nice metaphysical distinctions, behind which treason and disaffection so often take their stand. On every occasion they have acted upon the noble maxim of the great *Republican* Blake, "that it is still our inflexible duty to fight for OUR COUNTRY, into whatever hands the government may be placed." A maxim which peculiarly applies to *our* government, which is always the choice of its citizens. The little and the peevish mind that seeks to circumscribe the reputation of these gallant men, by confining it to any particular sect or party, can have no just perception of true glory, and no honest wishes to stimulate or reward the exertions of the brave. Our valiant navy is of no party; it fought for no party; its renown belongs to no party, but to the people of the United States and their posterity for ever.

P.

DESCRIPTION OF THE

HARBOUR OF BERGEN IN NORWAY.

[*Extracted from the Journal of the U. S. Frigate President.*]

Sunday, June 27th, 1813. Light breezes and hazy. At half past four P. M. Lieut. Perry, (who had been dispatched for a pilot) returned with two fishermen, whom he obtained on the Island of Udvaer. Udvaer is one of a group of small sterile islands, whose inhabitants depend solely upon catching fish, the soil producing nothing more than a bare sufficiency of grass to support a few miserable half starved cows. On Mr. Perry's landing, the inhabitants of Udvaer were much alarmed, but finding we were not English, they discovered a disposition to be very hospitable, offering him milk, fish, and brown bread made into cakes, about the circumference of a ship biscuit, though not thicker than a thin wafer.

At five, made sail for North Bergen. At eleven, it being

foggy, brought to, on the starboard tack, about three leagues to the northward of the Island of Fye, which is at the north entrance of the sound leading to Bergen. At midnight, the fog having cleared away, made sail for Bergen. At one A. M. passed the Island of Fye. At two made signal for a regular pilot. At thirty minutes past two, a couple of pilots came off from the Island of Ooe, who informed me, that others had been prevented from coming, by an apprehension that we were English. At ten A. M. arrived in sight of Bergen, but the wind being light, and a strong irregular current setting, prevented our getting to anchorage until meridian, at which time anchored with the starboard bower in fourteen fathoms, in a small bay, at the north end of the city, mooring head and stern with the stream cable clenched to an iron ring in a rock on shore. Previous to anchoring, sent a boat on shore with Lieut. Morgan, to represent the character of the ship, and to inform the commanding officer of the military of my intention to fire a salute, provided he would answer the compliment, by returning an equal number of guns.

Monday, June 28th. Pleasant weather. At two P. M. Lieut. Morgan returned, with information of his having been politely received, and that the commanding officer, Major Gen. Lowson, governor and commandant of the fort, had expressed his readiness to return my salute, gun for gun.— Fired seventeen, which were immediately answered with an equal number. This ceremony over, the general sent one of his aids on board, to welcome our arrival, with compliments, offers of civilities, &c.

The curiosity of the inhabitants of Bergen, on seeing an American frigate, was now strikingly manifested. Soon after our anchoring, the whole bay in which we lay appeared alive with boats, crowded with spectators of all classes, and so continued not only during the afternoon, but the whole night. Indeed it seemed as if their curiosity could never be sufficiently gratified, as the only pleasure the inhabitants of the city and surrounding country appeared to enjoy, was rowing round the ship, a practice which they continued night and day, until the moment of our departure. Many of them, however, suspected us to be English from first to last.





WERT BOOKBINDING

JAN

1989

Grantsville, PA

